

Here is the profile of the patient: six year-old Angus cow nursing a three month-old calf. Mother and calf in good range condition for January in the shortgrass country. Supplementary ration is 21 pounds per week of 20 percent cottonseed feed, plus free choice salt and minerals. Pasture conditions are above normal, temperatures warmer than average. Mother licking (grooming) herself. Owner (me) in state of nerves.

Symptoms: multitude of pustule lesions on each side of the cow's neck extending to the top of the dewlap from the jaw line near the point of the shoulder intense enough to color the skin yellow. The affected area resembles acid burn. She is giving plenty of milk, has a good appetite, a moist nose, no swollen joints, no coughing or nasal discharge, and shows no discoloring in the eyes. Range doctor (me) puzzled; shows signs of the blind stares.

As soon as we saw her on the feed ground, we brought her and her calf to the hospital pen. Two winters before, a cow that lost all her hair died. The same month a neighbor's bull met the same fate. The drouth was so severe in those days, we thought a lot of troubles stemmed from loss of will to live. Barber shops in Angelo the same hard winter began to notice fewer clippings to sweep after herders hit town. I worried myself over losing my hair until my teeth started working loose.

But the baldness of the previous cases was different than the present one. She reminded me of what a friend said: "I can't understand how I can be as sick as I am and still be in such good health." I rode and walked over the pasture looking for weeds high enough to brush against her body or infect her on the bed ground. Sat on a feed trough watching her eat. Examined her excretions for mucous or blood. Called and failed to reach a specialist in bovine skin diseases.

On the second morning after her admission, I called a veterinarian who specializes in keeping cattle healthy in a feedyard environment. After a long conversation, he prescribed applying a weak solution of iodine externally and injecting 30 cc of antibiotic under the skin on each side of her neck. He agreed to furnish the iodine as the animal health stores in San Angelo only carry the 10 percent solution.

At the end of the conversation, I asked how much I owed him. He replied, "A bottle of scotch whiskey if it works; nothing if it doesn't." I accepted, as I knew from feeding cattle in his yards that he wasn't going to have time to check the cow's condition. Whatever this mysterious ailment was, chances were mighty slim she'd grow back her hair. So all he was going to get out was a pint bottle of iodine to bet against gaining what I supposed was going to be an equal size bottle of Scotch whiskey.

In two treatments her skin became normal. Applications of bacon grease softened the hide. The other cattle remained unaffected. The specialist at the College of Veterinary Medicine returned my call. He was unable to diagnosis the problem, yet commended the treatment. Once she was back in the herd, we were unable to tell the cow from the other cattle.

San Angelo liquor stores never advertise specials. The only time I buy whiskey is for the Fling Ding dance in Sonora that charges a bottle for admission. The last Scotch I bought was a birthday gift in 1977 for \$9 a fifth. The reason I remember is that my pal claimed only one drink was gone from the bottle by his next birthday.

Confronted with the new prices for Scotch, I thought they meant the whole shelf was \$45, not one bottle. The clerk was impatient. Mumbled something about not being interested in the history of whiskey prices in West Texas. Treated so shabbily, I grabbed the first pint priced under 10 bucks, had her sack it and left.

The good doctor wasn't home to accept his tax-free reward. Made me uncomfortable hiding the bottle in a hedge by his front door. The postman in the doctor's neighborhood delights in detecting deficient postage on the cards I post to friends on his route. He'll make three calls trying to collect a nickel. I sure didn't want a penny-pinching, Civil Service of a stamp-snooping postman to steal a nip off a

bottle I'd bought, especially from a whole pint of Old Folly Flinch Scotch-flavored whisky.

I knew fish oil and turpentine restored hair. I learned the recipe shining shoes at the barber shop many years ago. But I didn't know iodine stopped bovine baldness. Ringworms hit the young calves last week, but I am going to hold off calling the doctor. Paying off in kind can be mighty expensive...